

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computer-implemented method, comprising:  
receiving an request directed to locating at least one  
version of a selected file or folder;

5 automatically obtaining a set of data corresponding to at  
least one prior version of that selected file or folder that  
may be maintained such that its data is accessible; and  
returning information corresponding to the set of data in  
response to the request.

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2. The method of claim 1 wherein the request is  
received from a user interface.

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3. The method of claim 2 wherein the user interface  
comprises an operating system shell user interface.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the request is  
received via an application programming interface call.

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5. The method of claim 1 wherein automatically  
obtaining a set of data comprises, requesting a list of one or  
more timestamps, each timestamp corresponding to a shadow  
volume.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the shadow volumes are maintained as differential files.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the shadow volumes are maintained on at least one remote server.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein communication with the remote server is via a CIFS file access protocol.

10 9. The method of claim 1 wherein automatically obtaining a set of data comprises, requesting attributes for each prior version of the selected file or folder that may be maintained.

15 10. The method of claim 1 wherein automatically obtaining a set of data further comprises, filtering any information indicative of a prior version that does not exist.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein automatically  
20 obtaining a set of data further comprises, filtering information indicative of a prior version that is not unique with respect to a prior version already represented in the set.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein returning information corresponding to the set of data in response to the request comprises returning a set of timestamps corresponding to shadow volumes.

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13. The method of claim 12 further comprising, displaying information corresponding to the set to enable user selection of a timestamp-identified shadow volume.

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14. The method of claim 1 wherein automatically obtaining a set of data comprises, requesting a list of one or more timestamps, each timestamp corresponding to a shadow volume, and further comprising, embedding a timestamp corresponding to a selected file on a shadow volume in a request to access the selected file or file attributes from that respective shadow volume.

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15. The method of claim 1 wherein automatically obtaining a set of data comprises, requesting a list of one or more shadow volume identifiers, and further comprising, embedding an identifier corresponding to a selected file on a shadow volume in a request to access the selected file or file attributes from that respective shadow volume.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the identifier  
corresponding to the selected file is embedded in the request  
such that distributed file system server name changes at  
distributed file system junction points do not affect the  
5 identifier.

17. The method of claim 15 wherein the identifier  
corresponding to the selected file comprises a timestamp.

10 18. The method of claim 1 wherein automatically  
obtaining a set of data comprises, requesting a list of one or  
more timestamps, each timestamp corresponding to a shadow  
volume, and further comprising, flagging a request to access  
the selected file or file attributes from that respective  
15 shadow volume to indicate that the request corresponds to a  
shadow volume.

19. The method of claim 1 further comprising, receiving  
a second request directed to restoring a selected file version  
20 in the set, and accessing the selected file version in  
response to the request.

20. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 1.

21. In a computer network, a system comprising:

5 a local client, the local client having an interface configured to receive a request directed to locating at least one prior version of a selected file;

a network communication mechanism;

10 a remote file server connected to the local client via the communication mechanism, the remote file server having at least one prior version of the file maintained thereon; and

the interface communicating a request for file version information to the remote file server, the remote file server responding to the request by returning a set of data  
15 corresponding to at least one the prior versions of the file maintained thereon, and the interface displaying information corresponding to at least part of the set of data to enable selection of a file version for restoration from the remote server.

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22. The system of claim 21 wherein the interface communicates the request for file version information to the remote file server via a redirector.

23. The system of claim 21 wherein the interface includes a user interface.

24. The system of claim 21 wherein the interface  
5 includes an application programming interface.

25. The system of claim 21 wherein the set of data corresponding to at least one the prior versions of the file comprises at least one timestamp.

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26. The system of claim 25 wherein each timestamp corresponds to a shadow volume.

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27. The system of claim 26 wherein each shadow volume includes a differential file corresponding thereto.

28. The system of claim 26 wherein the interface communicates the request for file version information to the remote file server via a redirector, and wherein the  
20 redirector is configured to flag requests seeking information from a shadow volume.

29. The system of claim 21 wherein the remote file server communicates with the local client via a CIFS file access protocol.

5        30. The system of claim 21 wherein the interface is further configured to communicate with the remote server to obtain file attributes.

10       31. The system of claim 30 wherein the interface is further configured to filter the information that is displayed based on the file attributes.

15       32. A computer-implemented method, comprising:  
receiving a request to locate information corresponding to prior versions of a file or folder;

obtaining a set of at least one timestamp, each timestamp corresponding to a shadow volume that may have a prior version of the file or folder maintained therein;

20       for each timestamp in the set, requesting file or folder attributes from the corresponding volume;

developing a list based on each response to the request for file or folder attributes; and

providing prior file or folder version information based on the list in response to the request to locate information.

33. The method of claim 32 wherein receiving a request  
5 to locate information comprises receiving an API call.

34. The method of claim 32 wherein obtaining a set of at least one timestamp comprises communicating with at least one remote file server having at least one shadow volume thereon.

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35. The method of claim 34 wherein requesting file or folder attributes from the corresponding volume comprises, identifying the shadow volume via its corresponding timestamp in the request.

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36. The method of claim 35 wherein identifying the shadow volume via its corresponding timestamp in the request comprises, embedding the timestamp in a path provided to the remote file server.

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37. The method of claim 36 wherein the timestamp is embedded in the path such that distributed file system server



name changes at distributed file system junction points do not affect the timestamp.

38. The method of claim 36 wherein identifying the  
5 shadow volume via its corresponding timestamp in the request further comprises, flagging the request such that the remote file server will detect the embedded timestamp.

39. The method of claim 32 wherein developing a list  
10 comprises, determining from the response to the request for file or folder attributes whether the file or folder exists on the shadow volume identified via a timestamp, and if so, including an entry representing the corresponding timestamp in the list.

15 40. The method of claim 32 wherein developing a list comprises, determining from the response to the request for file or folder attributes whether a unique file or folder entry exists in the list, and if not, adding an entry  
20 representing the corresponding timestamp to the list.

41. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 32.